

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAM-01 OMB-01 CU-02 NIC-01 SY-05 SCS-03 SCA-01 OPR-02

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P R 101758Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1996

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1303

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PORTUGUESE MINISTER OF SOCIAL
COMMUNICATIONS, COMANDANTE JORGE CORREIA JESUINO ON SETUBAL
INCIDENTS

REF: LISBON 1279

1. RAISED MALTREATMENT OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS (REFTEL)
WITH NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS
(INFORMATION) CORREIA JESUINO. TOLD HIM I KNEW GOP WAS
CONCERNED WITH ITS PRESS IMAGE OVERSEAS, AND THAT INCIDENTS
SUCH AS TOOK PLACE IN SETUBAL THIS LAST WEEKEND WOULD CERTAINLY
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DO NOTHING TO IMPROVE THAT IMAGE.

2. JESUINO SAID HE DOUBTED THAT JOURNALISTS HAD BEEN SINGLED OUT, THAT THEY WERE MOLESTED SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WERE PART OF THE OVERALL SCENE. I TOLD HIM I HAD SPENT TWO HOURS WITH JOURNALISTS AND THIS WAS SIMPLY NOT THE CASE. AGITATORS WERE HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL AND HAD DEMANDED TO SEE JOURNALISTS' ID CARDS. THERE NO DOUBT THEY KNEW WHO THEY WERE AND THAT MOLESTATION WAS DELIBERATE.

3. I TOLD HIM JOURNALISTS WERE PARTICULARLY IRRITATED BY TODAY'S STATEMENT BY HIS MINISTRY WHICH, WHILE REGRETTING THAT ACTS OF PUBLIC DISORDER INVOLVED FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, ALSO CLAIMED THESE KIND OF EVENTS FREQUENTLY TAKE PLACE WHERE THERE IS PUBLIC AGITATION AND CAN HAPPEN IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD. FOREIGN JOURNALISTS BELIEVED AGITATORS WOULD INTERPRET THIS STATEMENT AS MEANING OPEN SEASON ON JOURNALISTS. SINCE I WAS SURE THIS WAS NOT INTENT I SUGGESTED JESUINO MEET IMMEDIATELY WITH JOURNALISTS INVOLVED. HE AGREED TO DO SO.

4. TOLD JESUINO THAT WEEKEND EVENTS WERE CERTAIN TO RESULT IN A SPATE OF STORIES ON VIOLENCE IN PORTUGAL. SAID I HAD TO CONFESS I ALSO WAS CONCERNED ABOUT WAVE OF VIOLENCE. JESUINO REPLIED THAT GOP WAS VERY WORRIED ABOUT ESCALATING VIOLENCE. WHEREAS VIOLENCE HAD BEEN FORMERLY DIRECTED ONLY AT PARTIES ON "THE RIGHT" IT WAS NOW AIMED AT GROUPS SUCH AS THE PPD. GOP WAS EVEN CONCERNED ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST SOCIALISTS AT THEIR FORTHCOMING RALLIES. VIOLENCE WAS NOT COMING FROM ANY OF THE PARTIES OF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION (HE THEREBY EXCLUDED THE PCP) BUT FROM LEFTIST REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS WHICH HAD NO POPULAR STANDING. THEIR OBVIOUS GOAL WAS TO FORCE GOVERNMENT TO CANCEL ELECTIONS.

5. JESUINO SAID GOVERNMENT WAS FIRM IN ITS RESOLVE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH ELECTIONS, AND WAS GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO OUTLAWING CERTAIN POLITICAL PARTIES. SAID HE LEARNED BY STUDYING U.S. THAT EVEN IN A DEMOCRACY THERE MUST BE RESTRAINTS.

6. COMMENT: JESUINO SEEMED GENERALLY INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN PRESS AND TOLD ME HE REGRETTED THE STATEMENTS AT HIS ORIGINAL PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH JOURNALISTS

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HAD READ AS THREATS. HE DID NOT INDULGE IN ANY DIATRIBE AGAINST THEM AS SOMETIMES HAPPENS HERE. NOR DID HE SEEM TO TAKE OFFENSE AT MY REMARKS, BUT I NOTE FROM LUANDA'S EXCELLENT CHARACTER ANALYSIS (LUANDA 242) THAT HE DOESN'T SHOW HIS RESENTMENT EVEN THOUGH IT IS THERE. AN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT IS THAT WHEN I HANDED HIM THE COMMUNIQUE FROM HIS OWN MINISTRY HE READ IT WITH GREAT INTEREST, AND APPARENTLY FOR THE FIRST TIME.

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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